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A CAHNERS/R. R. BOWKER PUBLICATION • *THE INTERNATIONAL NEWS MAGAZINE OF BOOK PUBLISHING* • JULY 26, 1991 $4.95

Children's Books for Fall

The art of Jon Agee, creator of *The Incredible Painting of Felix Clousseau*, beckons readers into a fall season filled with books.

PublishersWeekly

THE INTERNATIONAL NEWS MAGAZINE OF BOOK PUBLISHING

VOLUME 238 NUMBER 33 • ISSN 0000-0019 JULY 26, 1991

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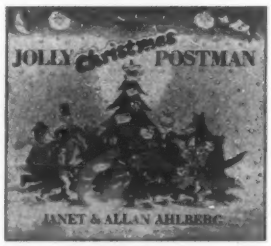

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EDITORS: JOANNE TANGORRA & JANET SCHNOL

ABA 1991: Children's Audio and Video Gains Wider Acceptance

BY JANET SCHNOL

Children's audio and video publishers had an enthusiastic response to this year's ABA convention held in New York City, reporting that, on the whole, retailers are now showing greater familiarity with the media than in previous years. Most of the people *PW* spoke to noted that audio and video are no longer sideline products but have established a definite and integrated presence at the show. As a result, both audio and video producers were able to concentrate on broader issues, such as market trends and product packaging.

Listening Library president Tim Ditlow comments that this year he saw many more audio products in general and greater cross-promotion of book and spoken-word audio titles than in years past. Listening Library displayed audio versions of Jack Prelutsky's *Something Big Has Been Here* and the complete Ramona Quimby series by Beverly Cleary, in addition to its extensive catalogue of titles. "It was a real working show this year," says Ditlow. "We were able to discuss our materials with buyers who were placing orders and re-orders. We feel as though we've arrived." Ditlow also notes that the company is now focusing more on children's-only stores.

This month, Listening Library will introduce new packaging for the retail market. B. Dalton, Walden and Kroch's & Brentano's will carry the trade paperback-sized cardboard box that houses a norelco-cased cassette. "Packaging is crucial to getting good titles into the chain stores," notes Listening Library's vice-president of marketing Arnie Cardillo.

According to Joseph Kulin, executive publisher for Parabola Audio Press, the current interest in mythology, folklore and multicultural issues is bringing his company's products into the limelight. "This is our moment in the sun," he says. Kulin adds that the company is looking into creating video for children based on their Storytime series of Native American tales, as booksellers have begun to ask about seeing the stories in this medium.

Helen Marcus

***Judy Collins** was on hand to sign copies of Random House's book and cassette,* Thumbelina.

The Oral Tradition, on Tape

Parabola's Native American series was also displayed at Harper Audio's booth; Harper's Caedmon imprint will produce the series in conjunction with Parabola. "The series is really the soul of spoken-word audio," according to Harper Audio publisher Susan Knopf. "It may be in a new format, but it's not new in terms of spoken tradition. The series really struck a cord with booksellers." Knopf notes that the company is looking toward working with storytellers on a regular basis, as she sees an upsurge of interest in the history of various cultures.

"Audio does get a spin benefit from trends in books, and this year we're seeing it in children's product," Knopf observed, citing the Native American series as a good example, along with African-American–related titles such as *My Life with Martin Luther King*, read by Coretta Scott King, and holiday promotions that will include *The Best Christmas Pageant Ever* by Barbara Robinson and Alvin Schwartz's *Scary Stories 3*, which were all prominently featured at the booth.

In terms of packaging, Harper introduced a double-cassette norelco box which, according to Knopf, has been favorably received by retailers and customers alike. In 1992 the company will bring out children's product using the new package. Also, Knopf says they are "looking into selectively converting more titles into CD." However, she notes: "One of the most important things to us is to move forward into CD with an ecologically sound package. This concern will be part of the evolution of our CD program."

First time exhibitor Disney Audio Entertainment featured its Disney Babies, Read Along and Disney Afternoon titles. According to George Morency, director of product development, "This is the first time a lot of booksellers are seeing Disney's expertise taken to broader age mar-

Elliott Smith

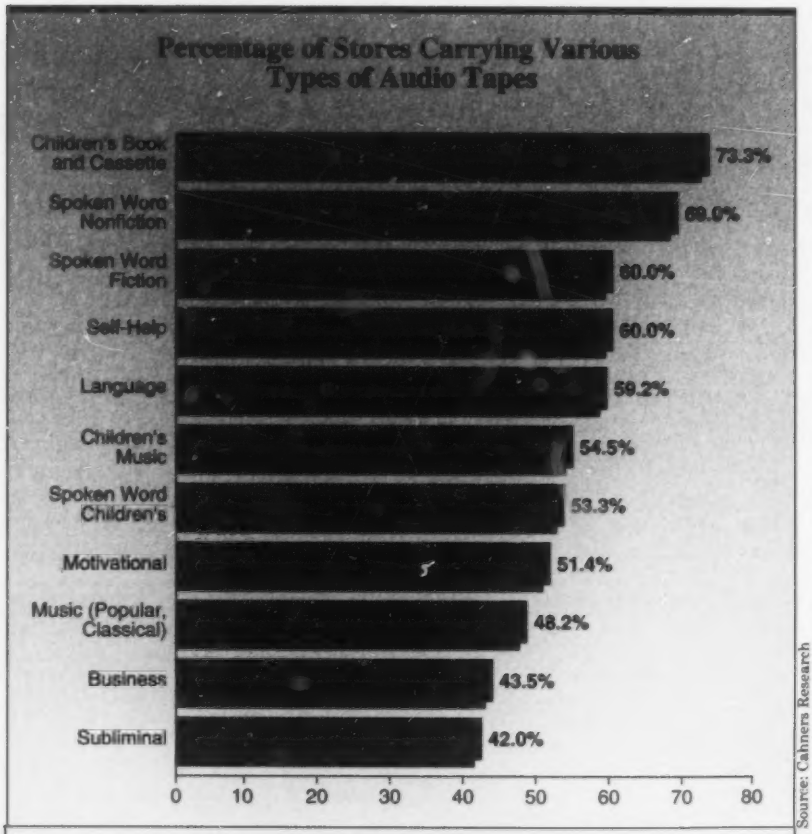
***Metacom** displayed packages of audiotapes that come housed in a wooden toy.* The Little Wonder Bus *is bright yellow and comes with four tapes by ex-teacher Jane Norman, who calls the school bus/holder "a good merchandising tool."*

kets, and the response has been great." He notes that the new Beauty and the Beast line, which consists of an audio pop-up theater containing a diorama, two figurines and an audiocassette; a pop-up book with a shorter version audio cassette; and a Read Along with a hologram watch, "epitomizes the direction we're going in." In addition, Morency says, "People have asked about CD format and we're prepared to go to CD."

Though the newly formed Sony Music Video did not exhibit at the show, director of children's programming Linda Morgenstern was on hand to discuss its upcoming list. The company's first CD and book package, which will also be available in cassette, is Raymond Briggs's *The Snowman*, with words and music by Howard Blake and music performed by the Simfonia of London. Morgenstern says, "People are seeing that there will be a place for all materials to be produced, and that our list shows a variety of format and product." Sony Music Video plans for the future include a new audiocassette by Kevin Roth called *Daddysongs*; *Snow White, Sleeping Beauty* and *The Wizard of Oz* in the Animated Classics, produced in conjunction with Britain's Pickwick studios, series and a video version of John Burningham's *Grandpa*, narrated by the actor Peter Ustinov, with a score by Howard Blake. The film version of *Grandpa* will air on Showtime this fall. "People in the industry have given us a very positive response," comments Morgenstern. "They are excited to know that they can commit to 'media,' rather than have many licensing agreements."

One veteran exhibitor, Public Media Inc., which has maintained a presence at the show for the past five years, had its "best ABA ever," according to Christene Lundberg, vice-president for research and development, who noted that "the first year, we were literally in the section with the sidelines." Featured at the company's booth, which is now integrated with those of book publishers at the show, was the video version of C. S. Lewis's *Chronicles of Narnia*. "We've had a wonderful response to our programs and we believe the catalyst has been the Chronicles of Narnia series," says Lundberg. Booksellers who initially said no to the collection, which includes the WonderWorks video line based on the PBS television series, have decided to take *Chronicles*, and the rest of the list has "leapt forward," Lundberg explains. "We're hoping this will be the beginning of stores learning that this type of programming can work for them."

Now that children's audio and video are coming into their own, the industry appears well-positined to incorporate new technology and more aggressively respond to consumer preferences. □



Source: Cahners Research

Bookstore Survey Shows Commitment to Children's Audio

In a recent study of the audio market, sponsored by *Publishers Weekly* and conducted by Cahners Publishing's market research department, 1000 bookstores were surveyed to determine the size of the market, types of audiotapes carried, the number of titles carried within each category and the selection process for ordering and stocking audiotapes.

With a total of 260 respondents whose stores currently carry or plan to carry audiotapes, here are the results as they relate to the children's audio market:

- 73% of respondents carry children's book-and-cassette packages. 54.5% carry children's music tapes, and 53.3% stock spoken-word product for children.
- Of the stores' total audio stock, 27% are children's titles.
- In a breakdown of audiotapes by category, respondents said they stock an average of 20 book-and-cassette titles, 19 music titles and 16 spoken word titles.

For further coverage of the survey, see the Audio/Video Plus section, Aug. 2.

Change of Address

As of August 1, please send all audio and video correspondence regarding children's and adult product to Joanne Tangorra, Audio/Video Editor, 362 Partridge St., Albany, N.Y. 12208

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Publishers Weekly (ISSN 0000-0019) RPUSA 123397457 is published weekly with additional issues in January, and August. Second Class postage paid at New York, NY and additional mailing offices. **POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Publishers Weekly, P.O. Box 1979, Marion, OH 43302.** All editorial and advertising correspondence should be addressed to the office of publication: *Publishers Weekly*, 249 West 17th St., New York, NY 10011; telephone: 212/645-0067; telex: 12-7703; fax: 212/242-7216. Address circulation correspondence and changes of address to *Publishers Weekly*, P.O. Box 1979, Marion, OH 43302; telephone 1-800-842-1669; in Canada and all other countries, telephone: 1-614-382-3322. Printed in USA. SUBSCRIPTION PRICES: U.S.A.: 1 year $119, 2 years $199, 3 years $279. Canada: 1 year $177, 2 years $301, 3 years $425. Air delivery to all other countries: 1 year $260, 2 years $442, 3 years $624. (Remit in U.S. funds only.) *Publishers Weekly* is published by Cahners Publishing Co., a Division of Reed Publishing USA, 275 Washington St., Newton MA 02158-1630. Terrence M. McDermott, President; Frank Sibley, Executive Vice-President; Robert T. Brawn, Sr. Vice President/General Manager; Jerry D. Neth, Sr. Vice President/Publishing Operations; J. J. Walsh, Sr. Vice President/Finance; Thomas J. Dellamaria, Sr. Vice President/Production & Manufacturing; Ralph Knupp, Vice President/Human Resources. Bowker Magazine Group is also an affiliate of R. R. Bowker Co., Bob Krakoff, Chairman of the Board; Ira Siegel, President. *Publishers Weekly*™ is a registered trademark of Reed Properties Inc., used under license. Chairman: Ronald G. Segel. Chairman and CEO; Robert L. Krakoff, President and COO; William M. Platt, Sr. Vice President. Cahners Publishing Company, a Division of Reed Publishing USA ☐ Specialized Business Magazines for Building & Construction, Research, Technology, Electronics, Computing, Printing, Publishing, Health Care, Foodservice, Packaging, Environmental Engineering, Manufacturing, Entertainment, Media, Home Furnishings, Interior Design and Lodging. ☐ Specialized Consumer Magazines for Child Care, Boating, and Wedding Planning.

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